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ABSTRACT

The goal of the Michigan plan for school staff development is to clearly describe a comprehensive approach to staff development. The plan relies on two basic assumptions. The first is that local school staff should be involved in the planning process. The second is that the state has a unique and specific role to play in facilitating quality inservice training and in identifying areas of need. Accordingly, the specific skills or knowledge needed by school staff are identified by local professional staff development programs and by state department of education personnel with responsibility for the administration of categorical funds for professional staff development activities. The program developed has four phases and works over a three-year period. The four phases include a first phase workshop in which personnel are expected to increase their awareness, readiness, and commitment for staff improvement; a second phase that emphasizes management techniques; a third phase that emphasizes community involvement with particular emphasis on school climate; and a fourth phase that is concerned with training to improve student self-concept. (Author/IRT)

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PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND CURRICULUM PRECONDITIONS TO EFFECTIVE EFFORT

"EDUCATIONAL POLICY AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT"

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EDUCATIONAL POLICY AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT
Paula Brictson, Michigan Department of Education

Background

During the past ten years much interest, concern and money have been devoted to programs to improve the quality of elementary and secondary education. Much has been accomplished as a consequence of programs such as the Federal ESEA Title I, III, and V programs initiated in 1965, the Michigan Educational Assessment Program established in 1969, the 1970 Michigan performance-based State Compensatory Education Program, the State Accountability Model adopted in 1971 and GESTALT, a building-level school program development model.

New teaching demands have accumulated at a very rapid rate, many of them stimulated by the state and federal support for new programs. There is a need to establish an orderly means by which new knowledge and new teaching strategies become diffused throughout Michigan's school systems. Department of Education records indicate that most provisional certificate holders complete requirements for a continuing teaching certificate four to six years after graduation from college. Of the approximately 109,000 certified persons employed in Michigan's public schools, 75 percent hold a permanent or continuing certificate and have completed all necessary state requirements beyond the bachelors degree.

In addition, a similarly high percentage of the professional public work force in Michigan is at or very near the top of the local district salary schedule. With declining student enrollments and provisions in most master contracts for layoffs to be made on a seniority basis, it is predicted that the professional school staff will tend to include more persons: 1) with extended experience; 2) at the maximum salary level; and 3) with higher levels of college or university preparation than ever before.

The Michigan Department of Education in recent years has concluded that one of the missing links to success in developing successful schools is the retraining and upgrading of staff based on locally identified needs. Unfortunately, it has been found that additional resources are often used to provide new materials, more people or improvements in equipment and facilities. Little or no resources are committed to improve the skills of the school staff. It is unfortunate that validated models of staff professional development programs are not readily available. Moreover, the appropriate role of the state has not been clear; traditionally, responsibility for professional development has been left to the individual employee or to the local school district without linkages to other district, state or national programs.

Role of the Michigan Department of Education

With its history of development of educational innovations in Michigan it is appropriate for the State Department of Education to take the lead in organizing and implementing a systematic approach to facilitate the local delivery of professional staff development programs for educators throughout the state.

In addition, the Department is key in professional staff development planning because of 1) the state educational agency responsibility for federal and state mandated programs with inservice components; 2) the recent ESEA amendments directing state education agencies to develop and submit to the United States Office of Education a comprehensive plan for coordinated use of federal and state funds for inservice and preservice training done by associations, institutions of higher education, and state and local education agencies; 3) the role of the Department in reviewing and recommending Teacher Corps and Teacher Center applications; 4) the mandate to provide technical assistance and dissemination services relative to the Federal Teacher Center program; and 5) the Department's established liaison with Colleges and Universities, local and intermediate school districts.

Inherent in a systematic approach to professional development programming is the notion of coordination of existing resources, collaboration among the various individuals and agencies concerned with the education of teachers and children, and development of inservice planning models which will allow for local assessment of educator needs, local planning of inservice activities, and local delivery of programs.

A Michigan State Plan for school staff development relies on two basic assumptions. The first assumption is that local school staff should be involved in the planning process for staff development activities designed to meet their needs. The second assumption is that the state has a unique and specific role to plan in facilitating quality inservice training and identifying areas of need. The goal of a state plan in Michigan is to describe clearly a comprehensive approach to staff development - a comprehensive approach that will assist local districts in meeting staff needs and involving teachers in the planning process.

Staff development is a process for reaching a product. The produce is a local district or building staff who are, as a result of the process, continually prepared and updated with specific skills and knowledge needed to perform their role. The specific skills or knowledge needed by school staff are identified in two ways as described below.

Method 1

Each local professional staff development program is charged with assessing the needs of school personnel in the region it serves. This may be done through the use of a formal needs assessment instrument. The most common type of assessment instrument measures perceived needs of teachers and other staff. However, local districts are encouraged to assess needs beyond those that are felt or perceived by teachers. Staff development needs can be identified through student achievement data, school climate analysis, and other indicators. The Michigan

Department of Education has prepared a special manual and inservice program (referred to as Project TEAM) to assist local staff in assessing their needs for professional development. At periodic intervals each local staff development program will submit a list of their priority needs to the Department of Education.

Method 2

Each service area and program component within the Department of Education with responsibility for the administration of categorical funds for professional staff development activities will also identify specific staff development activities for local school staffs. The skills and knowledge identified by each area (career education, bilingual education, and so forth) will generally evolve from state legislation, state board policy or federal guidelines regarding a particular program. For example, as a result of the 1976 (federal) Education Amendments, vocational education is now obligated to take steps to eliminate sex bias and sex role stereotyping in vocational programs. Since vocational programs are at the local level, it might be determined by the Vocational-Technical Education Service area of the Michigan Department of Education that teachers and other staff should have training to help them identify sex-bias in their programs and materials and to obtain the skills necessary to modify programs and materials so that they become sex-fair. There are similar examples which could be cited for each of the service areas and program components within the Department of Education.

It is the responsibility of each Department unit to analyze and prioritize the needs identified in Method 1 and Method 2 and determine the best relationships. Each service area and program component will design a staff development plan of action which will delineate clearly those inservice programs to be developed and/or supported by that unit. Plans of action will be updated or revised annually.

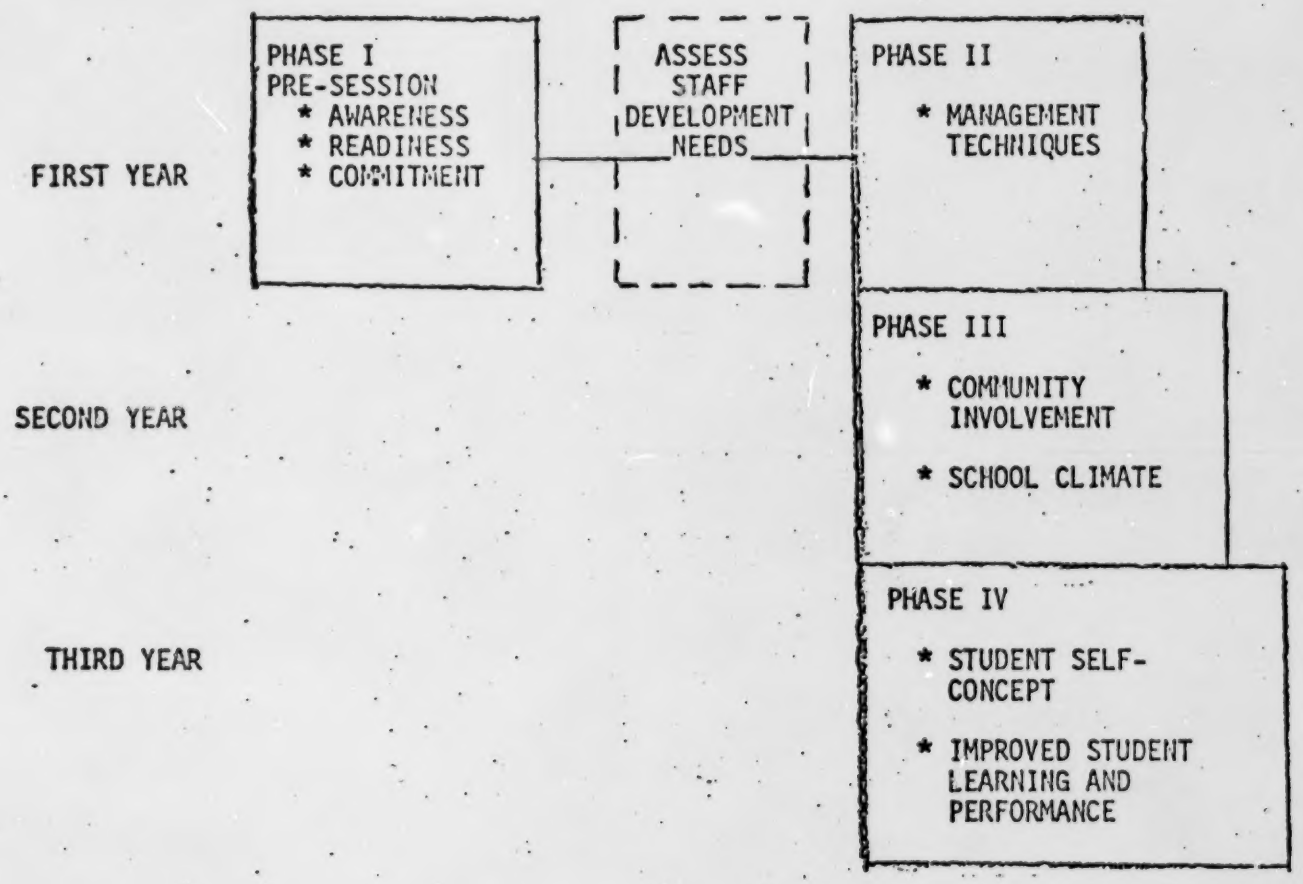
In summary then, the process includes:

1. A compilation of identified needs from the local or regional staff development programs;

2. An identification of needs by Michigan Department of Education service areas and program components;
3. The establishment of priorities by service areas and program components utilizing input from one and two above;
4. A plan of action based on the priorities, developed by each service area or program component.
5. A communication from the Office of Professional Development to local and intermediate school districts showing priorities established by service areas and program components.

Michigan State Model for Staff Development

The Department has developed a four phase, three year model for intensive staff development programs which allows for local assessment of needs, local planning of inservice activities, and local delivery of programs. This model grew from the Department's experience with its Accountability Model, the GESTALT program and Department and university collaborative research on school climate and school change. Statewide planning should be initiated and coordinated by the Department of Education, while staff professional development programs primarily occur external to the Department, utilizing resources identified by national, state, intermediate and local education agencies, colleges and universities and individual practitioners. The Michigan Model for Staff Development as presently designed incorporates the following components:



MICHIGAN STATE MODEL FOR STAFF DEVELOPMENT

Phase 1 - AWARENESS, READINESS AND COMMITMENT . . .
Anticipated Initial Workshop Outcomes

It is anticipated that as a result of an initial workshop, the staff of a building or a group of school specialists will experience increased awareness of specific student learning problems and contributing factors; will express willingness to participate in training activities; and will demonstrate commitment to utilizing newly acquired knowledge and techniques to foster improved student learning.

Additional outcomes for staff should be:

(a) agreement on priority program areas to be addressed

(b) agreement on time and money needed to carry out an effective professional development program

(c) commitment to seek school district support for an extensive professional development program over a three-year period.

Phase 2 - IMPACT ON TEACHERS AND OTHER SCHOOL STAFF . . .
Anticipated First Year Training Outcomes

The first year of training would be centered on classroom and building level management techniques.

A second outcome might be agreement at the building or curriculum area level on the need to show an interrelationship among: (a) expectations for students: (b) textbooks and other learning materials utilized; (c) standardized tests used to determine student growth; and (d) methods of reporting to students and parents or guardians.

A third outcome might be the identification of those students whose minimum needs were not met within the prescribed time and staff and school district agreement to provide extended learning opportunities and alternative programs for them.

A fourth outcome might be the development and use of year-end procedure for making recommendations for continuous school program improvement.

Finally, at the close of this and each subsequent year of professional development, any continued training would be undertaken only after an indication from the staff that the year-long professional development activity was indeed beneficial and that the process was worth the time, effort, and resources expended.

Phase 3 - IMPACT ON COMMUNITY AND SCHOOL CLIMATE . . .
Anticipated Second Year Training Outcomes

The second year of training would focus on community involvement, with particular attention to improving school climate.

One of the anticipated outcomes of the second year of professional development activity might be the improved ability of the school staff or group of specialists to convey to parents, through the reporting process, the relationship among expectations for each student, the instructional program, and the accomplishments of each student.

A second significant outcome of the second year activity might be a survey of the school community to determine if the community, particularly parents, perceives a more positive atmosphere in the school building.

A third anticipated outcome might be a clear indication that school climate had changed in a positive direction.

A fourth outcome of the second year might be the identification by school staff of particular professional development needs, linked to school program, to be addressed during the third year of training.

Phase 4 - IMPACT ON THE STUDENTS . . .
Anticipated Third Year Training Outcomes

The third year of training would address particular staff development needs identified by staff, as well as methods for improving student self concept.

A significant anticipated outcome of the third-year activity would be demonstrated improvement in student self-concept. A second outcome might be demonstrated improvement in student learning and performance throughout the school building or among the students enrolled in the particular classes of the specialists involved in the professional development program.

A third anticipated outcome might be a clear indication of community support for the school program.

A fourth outcome might be agreement on a consolidated plan to relate expectations for students to teacher needs and teacher needs to continued professional development supported by local funding.

Conclusion

This model is designed to provide an understanding or a process and set of anticipated outcomes or an organized professional staff development activity. Continuous evaluation at the close of each phase of the model, focused on a checklist of anticipated outcomes, shall be designed to make clear to all participants that this approach to professional development is one means of putting it all together for quality education.

This total process for school staff development is intended to provide a framework around which the staff of each participating building or group of specialists can, working with people from the Department of Education, higher education institutions, and local and intermediate school districts, design training programs to meet their own needs and those of their students.

The State Department of Education must assume an important leadership function to enhance the implementation of improved professional staff development programs. The role of the Department is one of coordinating, brokering, networking and disseminating to have an impact on the development of professional staff inservice planning models for local educators.